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## Black Lives Matter Statement

We, the faculty and staff of the Department of Luso-Hispanic Studies unequivocally state that Black Lives Matter. We see the pain and suffering that white supremacy has inflicted on Black communities in the US and worldwide. We denounce the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other Black people in the US, and we firmly commit to unwavering anti-racist action.

We condemn the racism on which broader social structures are built and we recognize that academic institutions in particular have been not just complicit but instrumental in creating and maintaining white supremacy. In the case of language, literature, and culture departments, issues of inequity are often exacerbated through curricula centering on hegemonic, Eurocentric, and/or imperialist literature, art, and culture. We commit to a thorough self-examination with the goal of developing a more diverse curriculum and inclusive pedagogical practices, and to create a more welcoming environment for our students, faculty, and staff. We intend to work towards assessing and resolving mistakes, gaps, and shortcomings in our anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

We are planning a number of concrete steps to continue decolonizing our curriculum and to develop more inclusive pedagogical practices. We hope our efforts will inspire departments who might see themselves as “race-neutral” to assess their commitment to anti-racist pedagogies and curriculum. The process of decolonizing the curriculum is crucial and it needs even more institutional support from the college administration. Hiring, mentoring, and guiding scholars of color in different fields and establishing financial support for diversity initiatives are essential, as is guiding the faculty across the college to recognize that equity and diversity are crucial to our development as academics and as people.

We are painfully aware that this year alone, several Black female faculty (tenure-track and term appointments, one of which in our own department) and one Black female staff member are leaving the college, in addition to one retiring Black faculty member. As a department, and a few of us as members of college-wide administrative committees, we will advocate for more administrative incentives to recruit and retain faculty of color throughout the college, as well as for financial support for Black Studies, CCSRE, and other programs focused on anti-racism, diversity and inclusion.

In light of the above, the Department of Luso-Hispanic Studies will take the following steps in the 2020-2021 academic year:

- 1) Begin a thorough departmental self-assessment that includes curricular, pedagogical, and work environment revisions. As part of the assessment process, establish conversations with Black students, students of color, and student organizations in order to receive feedback on how we can improve.
- 2) Continue our commitment to teach global Black experiences, knowledges, history, cultural production, and epistemologies. In line with current social and philosophical developments, establish a continuing discussion on the ways in which texts and materials are used in our classes and how they impact our students. Ensure that anti-racist topics, texts, and pedagogical practices are incorporated in all our classes.
- 3) Work as a team to identify and deconstruct biases against marginalized/minoritized languages and language varieties and how they are perceived in relation to formal linguistic structures in Spanish and Portuguese. We are committed to deconstructing power relations (and their ramifications) between different varieties of Spanish and Portuguese as well as different languages, such as English/Spanish or Portuguese in the US, Spanish or Portuguese/Indigenous Languages in Latin America, or Portuguese/Creole or African languages in the Caribbean, Brazil, Lusophone Africa, and other regions.
- 4) Establish an on-going speaker series with annual themes focused on the experiences of various marginalized groups in Luso-Hispanic studies. In Fall 2020, the inaugural year will focus on the Black and Black Latinx experience. In following academic years, we expect to continue with topics on indigenous cultures, Latinx, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized groups. A number of faculty in the department already explore such topics in their courses. Some examples dealing with Black culture include the importance of Black athletes such as Pelé and Roberto Clemente in popular culture, the representation of Blackness in zombie horror movies, Black AfroLusophone female icons, Black Peruvian history, creativity and resilience in the Caribbean, the deconstruction of colonial discourses, etc. These faculty will deliver interactive talks showcasing their research and pedagogy pertaining to issues of diversity. As funding becomes available, we plan to expand the series with outside speakers.
- 5) Continue our commitment to collaborate actively with the Black Studies Program, with the Anderson Freeman Resource Center, the Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity, and faculty organizations such as the Middlebury AAUP's anti-racist group.

We know that these are just beginning steps in the process of establishing equity and decolonizing a curriculum and institutions built over centuries of oppression, and we fully intend to continue to remain committed to the process in the long run. Establishing an environment where Black people, indigenous communities, POC, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities and other marginalized groups of students, faculty, and staff can feel welcome and heard is difficult and necessary work. Our reward will come when students see in the department of Luso-Hispanic Studies an intellectual, social, and solidarious hub for underrepresented students.

Sincerely,

Luso-Hispanic Studies

Co-signed, alphabetically

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